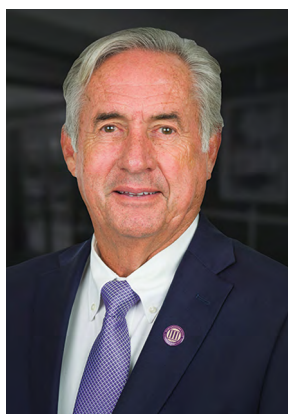


SPRING 2026 Alumni Columns

Northwestern State University Magazine



GREETINGS



James T. Genovese (1971)
President
Northwestern State University

Dear Alumni,

As we move through the spring semester, it has been encouraging to see so many activities taking place across campus and throughout our region. From legislative meetings and community partnerships to student competitions and alumni engagement, Northwestern State continues to serve our students and communities in many ways.

During many conversations this year, we reviewed progress on several important projects, including improvements to Warrington Hall and the continued development of Innovation Park. We also discussed the importance of continued state support for academic programs that prepare students to meet Louisiana's workforce needs and provide strong educational opportunities for military service members and their families. I am grateful for the support and advocacy of our legislators as we work together to advance initiatives that strengthen our campus, expand educational opportunities, and support student success.

Thank you for all you do to support NSU.



Jill Bankston (1997)
Director
Alumni & Development

Dear Alumni,

A heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you who joined us during our Demons on the Road tour! This year's gatherings were among the most successful in recent years, and it was truly inspiring to reconnect with so many alumni—both long-time friends and new faces. The energy and enthusiasm you brought have helped us “reboot and revamp” our alumni chapters in meaningful ways. If you'd like to get involved, we'd be delighted to help you find a place in this growing network.

We're also deeply grateful for your tremendous support of Flavor of Louisiana. As our largest fund raiser, it takes a strong team of staff, volunteers and alumni like you to make it shine—and this year's response was nothing short of amazing. Together, we raised more than \$120,000 to support alumni engagement, student scholarships and other worthwhile causes for our beloved Northwestern.

To our Class of 1976 graduates, we can't wait to celebrate your Golden Jubilee on May 12 and 13, along with the 50+ Luncheon on May 13 for those who graduated more than 50 years ago. Details are on the back cover, and you should have already received your invitation by mail. Please contact our office for questions and/or additional information at (318) 357-4411.

We can't wait to see you again soon. Let's keep the Demon spirit alive and thriving!

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Flavor of Louisiana, Northwestern's biennial spring fund raiser, took place March 20 and drew a crowd of more than 500 guests to socialize, sample Louisiana cuisine and raise funds for student scholarships, program enhancements and faculty development opportunities. The event raised more than \$120,000.



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NSU Education Professor Hailey honored as an LEH Bright Light

Dr. Debra Jo Hailey, an associate professor in the Child and Family Studies program at Northwestern State, was named the 2026 Light Up for Literacy awardee by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Hailey was recognized for her work developing family literacy festivals and delivering childhood literacy experiences with an emphasis on community buy-in across Louisiana.

"The Bright Lights Awards celebrate those who protect, interpret and elevate Louisiana's rich cultural heritage," said Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser. "These awardees reflect the depth, diversity and statewide impact of the humanities in Louisiana and the role they play in shaping who we are. They remind us why our cultural heritage is one of our greatest strengths."

A LaSalle Parish native, Hailey's work focuses on interrupting the poverty cycle and teaching parents about the importance of engaging children in conversation about stories, centering literacy on family well-being. In 2009,

she developed, recruited volunteers, marketed and implemented her first family literacy festival, Reading on the River, in Natchitoches. From the start, Reading on the River engaged children and their families in developmentally appropriate stories and related hands-on activities.

"Year after year, high quality research studies indicate a strong connection between children's school readiness and the language interactions they had in the home prior to school entry," Hailey said. "Children who have basic literacy skills, strong vocabulary, conversational skills and experiences that broaden their understanding of the world along with the language to describe those experiences enter school ready to learn to read and put their thoughts on paper, which, in turn, develops into higher academic achievement throughout elementary school."

After personally shepherding Reading on the River for several years, Hailey handed the reins over to a local service organization and it continues to thrive. Hailey also developed Tales on the Trail in southern LaSalle Parish, Once Upon a Time in the Park in Hammond, Once Upon a Time in Winn in Winnfield and Tales on Candy Cane Lane in northern LaSalle Parish.

Hailey and eight other Bright Lights Awards recipients were honored during the organization's annual awards dinner March 24 at the Capitol Park Museum in Baton Rouge.

For more than 40 years, the Bright Lights Awards have offered a collective opportunity to celebrate all the humanities have to offer and honored documentary filmmakers and photographers, literacy and language advocates, historians and authors, culture advocates and more. The awardees will be highlighted in the summer issue of 64 Parishes magazine, published by the LEH.

Presented in partnership with the State Library of Louisiana's Center for the Book, the Light Up for Literacy award recognizes those who have made

significant and lasting contributions to literacy efforts in the state.

"Unfortunately, children from poverty-stricken homes are more likely to experience family stressors like food insecurity, unstable housing situations and transportation issues," Hailey said. "With those concerns on their minds, the parents are understandably more likely to spend money and time on basic needs rather than purchasing children's book. Family Literacy Festivals help to fill some of these gaps by providing parents with information and models for reading aloud, questioning and making every day experiences into learning experiences."

Hailey recently partnered with NSU professors Dr. Michelle Fazio-Brunson and Dr. April Giddens, Dr. Amy Weems and attorney Brett Brunson in writing a chapter titled "Remapping the Cradle to Prison Pipeline in the South: Family Literacy as a Vehicle for Change" for "Voices of Early Childhood Educators: Conversations about Change in the U. S. South," a book published last year by the Southern Early Childhood Association. This chapter specifically highlights Louisiana and the literacy challenges it faces, as well as emphasizing the responsibility of educators to be change agents for the betterment of children, families and communities. Hailey's family literacy festivals are described in the book as research-based support systems that empower young children and their families.

"None of this happens as the result of an individual," she said. "It happens as the result of inter-agency collaborations, community engagement and fabulous volunteers. Good communication and having a core set of beliefs and goals are at the heart of what brings us together to make the Family Literacy Festivals thrive and serve our communities."

Hailey continues to make books more readily accessible to every child and family across the state by strengthening ties to Natchitoches Parish, Winn Parish and LaSalle Parish with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL), a philanthropic project that sends high-quality books to young children monthly. Hailey worked with community leaders in the successful effort to secure funding for the project for the next five years.

continued on next page



School of Kinesiology: HHP's new name clarifies purpose



NSU's former Department of Health and Human Performance is undergoing a rebrand and will be known as the School of Kinesiology. From left are School of Kinesiology staff and faculty Tammy Dobson, Dr. Jackie Calhoun, Dr. Haley Blount, School Director Dr. Tara Tietjen-Smith, Maya Lucas, Dr. Lauren Mitchell, Dr. Michael Moulton and Dr. Sunggun Jeon.

Northwestern State University's Department of Health and Human Performance has been renamed the School of Kinesiology to better reflect the growth, scope and national standing of the department that prepares students for careers in physical therapy, occupational therapy, sports and exercise science, rehabilitation, sports management, coaching and wellness.

The change was approved by the University of Louisiana System and the Louisiana Board of Regents earlier this year.

"This change aligns the School's identity with widely recognized terminology used by peer institutions, employers, graduate programs and professional organizations," said School Director Dr. Tara Tietjen-Smith. "This is not a programmatic overhaul. All degree requirements, courses, faculty, accreditation and student pathways remain unchanged. The transition is designed to preserve continuity while improving clarity, visibility and long-term positioning."



Tietjen-Smith said the School of Kinesiology designation more accurately communicates the academic focus on human movement, health and performance and enhances the marketability and external recognition of student degrees.

"This transition strengthens academic identity, supports recruitment and external partnerships, and positions the School for future growth, while honoring the history and accomplishments of the Department of Health & Human Performance.

More information is available by visiting their website at <https://www.nsula.edu/kinesiology/>.

Professor Hailey honored *continued*

"I am thankful for NSU students who are interested in getting involved at the Family Literacy Festivals and I am thankful for a university that is interested in helping surrounding communities," she said. "The NSU Child and Family Studies Endowed Professorship has been so beneficial in supporting the Family Literacy Festivals and supporting ways to share my research."





NSU awarded \$1.8M in federal funding to advance Innovation Park

Northwestern State University was awarded \$1.8 million in federal funding through the Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) process to support the development of Innovation Park, a transformative STEM initiative designed to expand research, strengthen workforce development and drive technological innovation across Louisiana.

University leaders expressed deep appreciation to U.S. Rep. Cleo Fields, U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy and U.S. Sen. John Kennedy, and their dedicated staff for championing the project through the federal appropriations process. Their leadership secured funding to purchase advanced equipment for Innovation Park, which will serve as an epicenter for STEM education in northwest Louisiana through a collaborative partnership between NSU and the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts (LSMSA).

Innovation Park will serve as a collaborative hub connecting NSU students with gifted high school students from LSMSA. In addition, the facility will function as a community and industry engagement center, creating opportunities for regional business leaders, entrepreneurs and industry partners to collaborate directly with students and faculty. This crossover between business development and advanced learning will foster innovation, support product development, strengthen public-private partnerships and stimulate economic growth throughout northwest Louisiana.

Fields emphasized Northwestern State's role in driving regional growth and opportunity, noting that the recent investment represents more than just funding; it reflects a strong commitment to the university's continued excellence and long-term impact. Highlighting the significance of the award, he stated, "Northwestern State University is a cornerstone of our region, and this \$1.8 million investment reflects my commitment to ensuring

our institutions have the resources they need to thrive. I am proud to have helped champion this funding and I know this award will have a positive impact on students, faculty, and the broader community for years to come."

Kennedy underscored the long-term importance of investing in education and workforce readiness.

"The key to Louisiana's future isn't the price of oil, or who's holding political office, or what our unemployment rate is. It's education. I'm proud to have helped secure this funding to prepare students at Northwestern State University for careers in growing industries and keep talent in Louisiana," said Kennedy.

Echoing the importance of forward-looking investments in higher education and technology, Cassidy highlighted how Innovation Park will strengthen both regional opportunity and national competitiveness.

"Investment in students is investment in our future," said Cassidy. "New tech equipment for Innovation Park will better prepare students at Northwestern to contribute to not only Natchitoches, but our entire country"

NSU President Jimmy Genovese said the federal investment reflects strong confidence in the university's role as a regional driver of innovation.

"This funding demonstrates what is possible when our federal delegation works in partnership with our university and community," said Genovese. "Innovation Park will provide our students with hands-on access to advanced technology, ensuring they are prepared to lead in high-demand, high-impact industries. This investment will transform the educational experience for our students while strengthening our state's workforce and economy for generations to come."

Chamber awards shine spotlight on NSU faculty, staff, alumni



4 Under 40 winners are, from left, Dr. Dylan Solice, Dr. Jasmine Wise, Dr. Mary-Katherine Maggio and Crit Miller with Kacy Young (2025), NYP chair.

The Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce named Northwestern State University's Office of Marketing and Branding as the recipient of the 2026 Go Natchitoches Award in recognition of last year's Proud to Be Purple campaign and its impact on strengthening connections between NSU, its student and the Natchitoches Parish community. The staff includes Amy Lee (2019), director; assistant director Cree Gentry (2022) and student workers Kieler Soape of Montgomery and Christopher Richard of Abbeville under the direction of Chief Marketing Officer Cole Gentry (2009).

Dr. Steve G. Horton (1988), executive director of the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, received the Chamber's 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award, marking the culmination of 40 years of service across K-12 and higher education. Horton will retire in June.

Before his tenure at LSMSA, Horton spent nearly 30 years at Northwestern State, where he served in a series of progressively senior academic roles, including professor, department head, dean, vice provost and interim provost. His long tenure at NSU shaped much of his leadership philosophy and strengthened his commitment to advancing educational excellence across the state.

Dr. Dylan Solice (2011, 2012), Dr. Jasmine Wise and Dr. Mary-Katherine Maggio were among this year's recipients of the 4 Under 40 Awards presented by Natchitoches Young Professionals, an initiative of the Chamber. Natchitoches entrepreneur Crit Williams was the fourth honoree.

The four "represent strong leadership in Natchitoches through their professional accomplishments, commitment to service and dedication to strengthening the local community," according to the Chamber.

Solice is an assistant professor of education and program coordinator of Educational Leadership at NSU, where he prepares future educators and school leaders to create meaningful change in their fields. With a career rooted in K-12



Cree Gentry and Amy Lee



Dr. Steve Horton



education, Solice has served as a classroom teacher, academic coach, coordinator and administrator before transitioning into higher education. In his current role, he also serves as an accreditation coordinator and faculty mentor for the Elevate-U initiative, which supports first-generation and underrepresented students through academic and engagement resources.

Wise serves as an assistant professor at NSU and has played an integral role in strengthening and expanding the university's Black Studies program through curriculum development, internship partnerships and community-focused programming. Her leadership bridges higher education, nonprofit work and community-based research, focusing on creating inclusive initiatives that support education, housing and community development.

Maggio is a lifelong Natchitoches resident who is deeply invested in the growth and success of Northwestern State students and the broader community. As director of First Year Experience and Student Engagement, she helps students develop leadership, event planning and professional skills that prepare them for successful careers. Through mentorship, she has guided interns, supported graduate assistants in securing local employment opportunities and created connections between students and community partners to strengthen workforce retention.

LDWF agent lauded for 2025 NOLA terrorist attack response

Lt. Suni Nelson was among 10 agents from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries honored for responding to the Jan. 1, 2025, New Orleans French Quarter terrorist attack last year. The agents received the LDWF Medal of Merit for response while working security during the mass casualty event that took place in the early morning of New Year's Day.

This was the first time LDWF has awarded the Medal of Merit, which is granted for "conspicuous and intrepid gallantry at the risk of life with full awareness of that risk."

Nelson is a doctoral student at Northwestern State University pursuing the Ed.D. in Adult Learning and Development. She and nine other agents were on a security detail for New Year's Eve and Sugar Bowl events within the French Quarter when the attack occurred, leaving 14 dead and 57 injured. The agents immediately responded to the scene and, once the threat was neutralized, helped render aid to victims and assisted in securing the area.

"LDWF agents are highly trained, and it surprises people that we have the skills and capabilities outside of regular conservation law enforcement," Nelson said. "Despite this perception, our agents handle a multitude of public service and public safety duties in addition to our duties surrounding the state's natural resources."

New Year's Eve 2024 was the second time that Nelson had participated in the joint security operation on Bourbon Street with LDWF's Special Operations Group, assisting Louisiana State Police and NOPD.

"It was a slow and quiet event until the horrific attack that took place," she recalled. "Although well trained, none of us could have prepared for the tragedy of a mass casualty event. Regardless, every trooper, officer and agent on scene stepped up and ran into danger to respond. I am so proud to be part of that group and to have the opportunity to help wherever I could. Responding to this type of event is a large part of why many get into law enforcement, and I am no different. Although it was a difficult experience, I have learned much from it and grown as an agent. I am devastated for those that lost their lives and grateful for the lives saved because of the efforts of those responders on scene."

Nelson made news in 2019 as the first woman to graduate as the top cadet from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Enforcement Division Academy. She applied to the academy motivated by a love of the outdoors and the agency's role in search and rescue and relief missions across the state. She then spent two years in the field before applying for a full-time position at the department's training academy.

"I love teaching and getting into training was always a goal of mine. I have been full-time at the academy ever since."

The Lafayette native earned an undergraduate degree in psychology at UL-Lafayette in 2010. Intending to become a therapist, she enrolled in Northwestern State's master's program in clinical psychology, graduating in 2013.

"I had incredible experiences at NSU, both as a student in the program and a participant in extracurriculars offered on campus. I joined the rowing team early on and stayed an extra semester in the grad program because I loved it so much," she said.

Nelson taught psychology classes at NSU as an adjunct instructor during and after grad school until starting her doctoral degree. It was also during her master's program that she began exploring careers outside the therapy and clinical setting.



Lt. Suni Nelson

"After I graduated, I was still considering options and continued to work at NSU as a tutor. In 2015, a friend of mine suggested working with the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Department as a reserve deputy. Law enforcement was always something I considered, and I applied to a part time position. I was accepted and began at the reserve academy. It didn't take long for me to realize I had a strong passion for the career. It seems like a jump from psychology to law enforcement, but I found that many of my interactions with people were bolstered because of my psychology background. Often, I would meet people at their worst, or after they experienced traumatic events. Although it wasn't therapy, I could still provide support as a deputy and leaned heavily on what I learned in graduate school."

In 2016 she applied for a position with NSU Campus Police and spent two years there learning about law enforcement, community policing and working with others. She enrolled in NSU's doctoral program in Adult Learning and Development in 2022. That degree is tailored for individuals seeking careers in workforce training and development, human resource management and community college settings. She will graduate this December.

"My experience in the doctoral program has already taught me so much that I have been able to apply to my career. I want to do more for my agency, both in training and as an administrator. All of our training utilizes an adult learning model, so this program was perfect for increasing my knowledge and capabilities," she said.

Nelson said she hopes the program will provide her with opportunities to influence and develop growth at the agency.

continued on next page

NSU artists collaborate on spring Natchitoches in Bloom series

Two original floral sculptures were unveiled in the Natchitoches Historic District this spring that are part of an ongoing public art series coordinated by the Natchitoches Historic Development Commission and Cane River National Heritage Area in partnership with Northwestern State University's School of Creative and Performing Arts.

The first, a steel magnolia sculpture designed by Hannah Fulton and forged by NSU Professor of Art Corbin Covher, was unveiled Feb. 12 at Susan Harling Robinson Memorial Park at the corner of Pine and Cypress streets. Harling Robinson, also an NSU alumna, was the inspiration behind the play "Steel Magnolias," written by her brother Robert Harling, which was made into the 1989 comedy-drama filmed in Natchitoches.

Fulton earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in graphic communications at NSU in 2016 and a Master of Fine Art with a concentration in drawing and painting at Louisiana Tech's School of Design. She is currently an assistant professor of art at Louisiana Christian University.

"The prerequisite is that it obviously needs to be distinctly Louisiana," Fulton explained. "My first instinct originally was Mardi Gras colors for all flowers, but I made it subtle. Of course, the cone in the magnolia is yellow and the stem and leaves are green. What's left is purple, which I would associate with NSU or royalty."

"Another major inspiration was the Catholic church, the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on Second Street. I just went to the Lesson and Carols program there last year. I really like stained glass windows and the black linework that frames shapes. I wanted the lines to have a bit more expressive quality and not so rigid."

On March 10, a 7-foot sculpture that blends a tell-tale sign of spring in Natchitoches – the tulip – with a Christmas



Professor of Art Corbin Covher is pictured with NSU alumni Hannah Fulton and Ethan McManus at the unveilings of two new Historic District sculptures.

lights concept was unveiled in the BOM Bank courtyard, 814 Washington Street.

"For my design, I wanted to play with the obvious and contrast two seasons Natchitoches is best known for, spring and Christmas," McManus said. "Using an iconic Christmas light bulb illustration with an altered color palette of 'spring,' my vision was to accentuate the overall height and bold shape of the tulip sculpture to create a striking gesture relatable to the city's festivals."

McManus graduated from NSU in 2014 and is one of Covher's former students. He continues to paint and create art with watercolor and colored pencils as his preferred medium. He was also the spotlight artist for the month of March at the Alexandria Museum of Art gift shop.

"I enjoy painting landscapes and portraits of people and places I see daily," he said. "I have had the honor creating three festival posters for the annual Pecan Festival in Colfax, as well as being



exhibited in a few of Louisiana's art galleries and museums as I try to continue to enter art shows and competitions."

"As an artist, it is an honor to be a part of something that will last for a very, very long time," McManus said. "I think having different flower sculptures makes for a fun and clever collection of hidden gems that blend and promote natural heritage with local art."

Covher has been involved with Art in Bloom since its beginning and introduced the idea of placing different types of flower sculptures that hold significant meaning to Natchitoches around the city. Natchitoches in Bloom sculptures previously unveiled are a poinsettia next to the Santa House by Emily Dawson, who was an NSU art student when it was unveiled in 2022, and a zinnia near the waterfall in Beau Jardin by Kassi Picou of Natchitoches that was unveiled in November 2025. An iris sculpture is planned for City Park to be unveiled later this year.

LDWF agent lauded *continued*

"The workforce development concentration has also been beneficial through what I've learned about leadership and developing opportunities for employees. The research side has also provided huge opportunities as I have been able to focus on my interests regarding law enforcement education and leadership. All my work deals with this, and the program has helped me grow and

develop new ideas that I can take back to LDWF."

"NSU has been a huge part of my life and education and I am proud to be a Demon," she said.

Information on NSU's doctoral program in Adult Learning and Development is available at: <https://www.nsula.edu/program/doctor-of-education-in-adult-learning-and-development/>.

Alumna Mignona Coté continues to earn CISO industry recognition

NSU alumna Mignona Coté, one of the leading chief information security officers (CISOs) in the industry, was recently recognized with two significant honors.

Coté was named one of Cyber Magazine's top 10 female leaders who are defending large enterprises against advanced cyber threats. According to the magazine, "the cybersecurity landscape of 2026 demands leadership that transcends traditional technical boundaries, requiring executives to secure critical infrastructure while enabling rapid digital transformation with AI." The magazine also points out the lack of gender diversity in the field, as women only hold "about 17 percent of CISO positions in Fortune 500 companies and make up 22 percent of the broader cybersecurity workforce."

Coté is one who is breaking that glass ceiling. She was one of seven top security executives to be recognized with a 2026 DallasCISO ORBIE Award, which honors CISOs who drive business transformation and industry impact. Presented by Inspire Leadership Network, Coté received the Global ORBIE for organizations over \$1 billion annual revenue and multi-

national operations. It was the second time she received the award attributed to her influence across two high tech industries.

Coté said she is honored to be recognized among such outstanding peers. She was an early pioneer in tech, starting with NSU, working across seven Fortune 500 companies and basing her principles on growing up in Natchitoches.

"The ORBIE is the preeminent executive recognition for C-suite leaders," according to [globenewswire.com](https://www.globenewswire.com). "Since 1998, the ORBIE Awards have recognized leadership excellence, building relationships between executives and trusted business partners and inspiring the next generation of executives. Finalists and winners are selected through an independent peer-adjudicated process led by prior ORBIE recipients. Criteria is



Mignona Coté

based on leadership and management effectiveness, business protection created by enterprise security and engagement in industry and community endeavors.

Coté is senior vice president and chief information security officer for Infor, one of the world's largest providers of enterprise cloud software. She has more than three decades of experience in information security, risk management, compliance and auditing.

Coté earned two degrees from Northwestern State, a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems in December 1985 and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish in May 1986. She was a member of Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority and Purple Jackets. She began her career as an IT auditor for the City of Shreveport, then was recruited to Dallas for a management training program with Comerica Bank. Since then she has become a world leader in multi-cloud security, building solutions in high-tech, healthcare, insurance and large financial institutions.

Last year, Coté was inducted into the Chief Security Officer Hall of Fame and has been recognized for pioneering work in the information security industry.



Mignona Coté was congratulated by colleagues on receiving the 2026 DallasCISO ORBIE Award. From left are George Mekhail (Toyota Financial), Jessica Moore (Inspire), Emily Andes (Infor), Derek Bush (Infor), Coté (Infor), Carlos Ramirez (Infor), Joe Czabajski (Citi), Kaitlyn Seykora (Infor) and Lourdes Gipson (Inspire).

Chicola named IBM Champion for AI partnership with NSU



Monty Chicola

Monty Chicola (1980) of Alexandria has been named a 2026 IBM Champion, an honor that “shines a spotlight on the most engaged and impactful of the passionate advocates, creators, and community builders who help make the IBM technical ecosystem stronger,” according to IBM.

Chicola is a software developer whose company, Real Vision Software, Inc. (RIV),

has been an IBM Business Partner Company for the past 35 years. Last year he was instructor in a ground-breaking course in Artificial Intelligence programming at NSU presented in partnership with IBM and NSU's School of Business.

“Being named an IBM Champion is the most distinguished award presented to an individual who doesn’t work for IBM,” Chicola said. “Nominations come from within IBM to recognize someone who has gone above and beyond. I got the award because of my involvement with IBM and NSU. It’s prestigious and I’m happy to have it.”

The award will be presented in April. As an IBM Champion, Chicola will attend numerous conferences and IBM-hosted events that recognize his ongoing advocacy and engagement,

receive a verifiable IBM digital badge and have access to learning and certification support to continue to expand his professional skills.

Chicola earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science and accounting in 1980 and founded Real Vision Software in 1992 after working as a programmer for 12 years. His company’s big break came when IBM saw the advantage of having Real Vision Software’s product along with IBM’s product covering mid-range businesses. They were later expanded to small businesses for IBM in the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico and Central America. Real Vision Software sells to banks, insurance companies, service bureaus, hospitals, government agencies, casinos, trucking firms, investment firms, manufacturers and utility companies.

Chicola will teach another IBM AI programming class through NSU’s School of Business this fall as the first university selected to offer a course on the emerging technology.

Chicola has remained engaged with NSU in a number of ways, serving on the NSU Alumni Association Board and on a presidential search committee. He was inducted into the Long Purple Line. NSU’s alumni hall of distinction, in 2018.



Roy Corley

Mathematician Corley honored by Concordia University Texas

Congratulations to Roy Corley, who was named last year’s Outstanding Adjunct for service to undergraduate students at Concordia University Texas in Austin. Corley has served as an adjunct professor of mathematics in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences at Concordia since 2010.

The Outstanding Adjunct Award recognizes faculty who perform meritoriously in service to the university, the community and their profession. Nominations are submitted by senior administrators, students, alumni, faculty and staff. The award speaks highly of Corley’s impact on the life and community of Concordia University Texas.

Corley earned a B.S. in Mathematics in 1966 and a M.S. in 1968. He was the first president of Phi Eta Sigma freshman honor society, whose faculty advisor was Dr. Eugene Watson, and earned a Freshman Math Award. He was also inducted into Phi Kappa Phi and during his senior year served as president of Blue Key, whose advisor was Dean Leonard Nichols, and as president of the Baptist Student Union, whose director was Myra Gullede.

CAPA induction adds three new members to Hall of Fame

Christopher Brown of Newark, Texas; Sherman Desselle of Houston and Mark Poole of Little Elm, Texas, were inducted into the Northwestern State University School of Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Hall of Fame following a Wind Symphony concert March 7.

Brown has served as the official artist for the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame since 2009. A former minor league pitcher turned nationally recognized sports artist, he is known for his dynamic athlete portraits and his ability to capture the emotion and motion of sport. His artwork has been featured in International Business Times, CEO Weekly and Beckett Magazine, and he has created pieces for major organizations including the Sugar Bowl.

Brown has illustrated three books including his book, "Life Lessons from the Diamond." He continues to broaden his impact through commissioned work for athletes and organizations, as well as gallery exhibitions across the United States.

Desselle's path to becoming an award-winning journalist began long before he stepped into a newsroom. As a student at Northwestern, he immersed himself in music and theatre within the School of Creative and Performing Arts - training that would ultimately shape every stage of his career. In addition to performing on and off campus in various capacities, he also pledged Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia - Gamma Rho Chapter (Spring 2004), and later Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. - Theta Chi Chapter (Spring 2007), two brotherhoods that deepened his commitment to service, discipline and creative excellence.

After graduating, Desselle returned to his hometown of Alexandria, to work in a grocery store deli until he figured out his next move. A chance encounter with a newsroom manager led to his first job in television as a part-time photographer at KALB-TV.

He went on to anchor KALB's top-rated morning program "Jambalaya" for seven years and won numerous Associated Press and Louisiana Association of Broadcasters Awards before joining NBC affiliate WDSU-TV in New Orleans



Christopher Brown, Sherman Desselle and Mark Poole, from left, were inducted into NSU's School of Creative and Performing Arts Hall of Fame on March 7.

as weekend anchor. His work there earned a regional Edward R. Murrow award and a reputation for elevating stories that matter to the community.

Beyond the camera, Desselle is deeply committed to mentorship, outreach and the arts. He has volunteered with youth programs, moderated community forums and political debates, organized scholarships, and served on director boards - including the Rapides Symphony Orchestra.

Poole is originally from Mesquite, Texas, and is in his eighth year at Lone Star High School. The Lone Star Wind Symphony was awarded the 2024 TMEA 5A Honor Band recently and performed at the 2024 TMEA Conference. The Wind Symphony was invited to perform at the 76th Annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in 2022. The Wind Symphony was recognized as a National Windband Honor Recipient of the Mark of Excellence in 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025. The LSHS Marching band advanced to the State Marching Contest in 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and was a finalist in 2019, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Poole was previously the director

of bands at Forney High School for 12 years. Prior to his appointment at Forney, Poole was the director of bands at Nimitz High School in Irving, Texas, director of bands for the Jasper Independent School district, and at Southwood High School in Shreveport, Louisiana. His bands received numerous sweepstakes awards (Texas and Louisiana). In 2003, the JHS Symphonic band was awarded the OPS (Outstanding Performance Series) award from ATSSB.

Poole received a degree in music education and saxophone performance from the University of North Texas. After completing his undergraduate degree, Poole graduated summa cum laude from Northwestern the following year, receiving his master's degree in conducting.

As a graduate assistant he was director of the Symphony Band, jazz band, basketball pep-band, marching band assistant and assisted and conducted the Wind Symphony. He also served as a private instructor and arranger for the Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band.

Information on NSU's School of Creative and Performing Arts is available at www.nsula.edu/capa.

Stacy named CEO of international hunting/conservation organization

Russell Stacy, a fourth-generation Natchitoches Parish farmer and 1990 graduate of Northwestern State University, has been named chief executive officer of the Dallas Safari Club, a global leader in hunter-funded conservation. Stacy was appointed to the position after serving on an interim basis for the past year.

Along with his farming business, Stacy owns an outfitting business with his partner and wife, Dr. Mary Edith Stacy, dean of the Graduate School at NSU.

Hunting has been a tradition in Stacy's family throughout his life. From whitetails to wildebeest, the Stacys have hunted around the globe. Involvement in conservation and wildlife organizations has also been an integral part of the Stacy family with Russell and Mary Edith, along with daughter Kaylee, being long-standing Dallas Safari Club Life Members and DSC 100 Volunteers.

Stacy steps into the role as DSC temporarily relocated its annual convention due to the planned demolition and reconstruction of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in downtown Dallas. The convention will be hosted in Atlanta again in 2027, before moving to Houston in 2028 and 2029.

"Dallas is — and will always be — home for DSC," Stacy said. "But these next few years give us an exciting opportunity to showcase DSC, our worldclass exhibitors and the incredible volunteers, board members and staff who bring our mission to life, to a broader audience. While we look forward to returning to Texas, our team is fully prepared to deliver exceptional shows in Atlanta that highlight DSC's commitment to conservation and the future of our hunting heritage."

"Russell has been a champion of DSC for many years," said DSC President Ray Mulholland. "From his early days as a dedicated volunteer at each convention to his service on both the DSC and DSC Foundation Boards — including his tenure as Foundation Board President, where he helped drive remarkable growth and impact — Russell has consistently demonstrated his commitment to our mission. On behalf of the entire DSC Board, we look forward to working with him as he leads DSC into the future."

The news was gratifying to one of Stacy's mentors, retired Northwestern State agriculture professor Dr. Sam Misuraca.

"I taught at Northwestern for more than 31 years and had hundreds of students. There are very few who stick in my mind like Russell does. You not only consider him as an outstanding



Russell Stacy

student, but also as a special kind of person who is a good friend, too," said Misuraca. "I think very highly of him. He's a fantastic representative of Northwestern and for him to earn this opportunity brings great credit not only to our university, but to the state of Louisiana."

"He loves to hunt, he loves the outdoors, and he is very committed to the conservation ideals of the Safari Club," said Misuraca.

Their longtime friend and hunting companion, state Sen. Jay Luneau of Alexandria, joined the DSC at Stacy's urging years ago.

"I'm also happy for our area, and our state, because this really puts us on the map as far as the hunting community," said the local senator. "The appreciation that the Dallas Safari Club membership has for him was expressed to me time and time again over the past few days when I attended the (DSC) convention. People recognize his efforts and leadership, and that will do nothing but bring credit to Louisiana."

"We've been hunting together for about 20 years now, and have enjoyed some great experiences together," said Luneau. "Russell got me into the Dallas Safari Club a long time ago. They're

true conservationists, and they promote the right values, to be good stewards of our natural resources. Russell and Mary Edith personify that."

DSC continues to experience significant organizational momentum, including the expansion of its Chapter network to 27 chapters, strong revenue and membership growth, and an elevated grants program that has deployed millions of dollars in recent years to support conservation, education and advocacy efforts around the world. With Stacy's long history of service to both DSC and DSC Foundation, the organization is wellpositioned for continued progress and expanded influence in the global conservation community.

"Having grown alongside this organization for many years, I'm honored to step into this role and lead DSC forward," Stacy said. "Our mission has always been bigger than any one person. My commitment is to lead with clarity, common sense, and deep respect for the shared values that define DSC. Together, we will build on our legacy and push boldly toward a future that ensures wildlife, along with the wild places they call home, continue to thrive."

Information on the Dallas Safari Club is available at <https://www.biggame.org>.

NSU Sigmas, Pi Kappas earn Morgan Extra Mile Scholarships

Members of Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority and Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity honored donors David and Sherry Morgan during a March 19 program in which students were awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships for outstanding achievement in academics, service and extracurricular engagement.

David Morgan is a 1973 NSU graduate and past president of NSU's Beta Omicron Chapter of Pi Kappa Phi. He established the Extra Mile Scholarship in 2008 to recognize members of Pi Kappa Phi who distinguish themselves through academic success, chapter leadership, campus involvement and part-time employment. The scholarship has since grown and is awarded at the national level as well as in the local chapter.

The Sherry Fargerson Morgan Extra Mile Scholarship for Sigma Sigma Sigma



was announced in 2017 and mirrors the criteria for Pi Kappa Phi by honoring students who are outstanding and high

achieving members of the chapter. Sherry Morgan is a 1973 graduate of NSU.

Minden couple 'pays it back' to NSU through scholarship

Daniel and Susan Williams Strange of Minden are assisting Northwestern State University students who need financial support by creating a scholarship through the NSU Foundation.

Daniel Strange attended NSU from 1967-71 and graduated with a degree in social studies education and a minor in school health education.

"While at NSU I worked in the Iberville and St. Denis Dining Halls and served as a monitor in West Caspari with Ms. Elma Hinton as housing director," he recalled. "In the fall of 1970, I was awarded a scholarship to run on NSU's cross country and track teams. I was fortunate to run for Coach Jerry Dyes during his first year as NSU's track and cross country coach. Running for NSU was a very rewarding experience. Ron Haworth was my running mentor. Another person who had a positive influence on me was a roommate, David Gates."

Daniel met Susan, an education major, at a Howdy Dance at NSU during the summer of 1971.

"She attended NSU for four semesters until we married the following August. Dr. Violet Davion, professor of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, convinced me to pursue a master's degree in School Health Education, which I did in 1972-73 at the University of Tennessee.

He never used his education degree, instead pursuing a busy career in affordable housing. He served as the executive director of three agencies in Louisiana and Texas and served the housing association in several positions on the state, regional and national levels. He then joined a friend's affordable housing consulting firm and later he and a friend started their own business, Housing Solutions Alliance.

After moving back from Tennessee, Susan Strange finished her degree and enjoyed teaching elementary students in Louisiana and Texas, serving in several positions at the schools where she taught. She later spent nine years marketing a medical plan for affordable housing agencies in 13 states.

The couple was active in the communities in which they lived. They served in many church positions, raised funds for a new YMCA in Texas and Dan



The Strange family are, seated from left, Micah Strange, Susan and Dan Strange, Grant Nguyen, Camille Nguyen and Jessica Strange Nguyen. Standing are Joshua, Jennifer, Calvin, Isaac and Noel Strange and Madeleine, Thang (T) and Everett Nguyen.

served on several mission trips and was active in Rotary International. They moved to the Minden area in 2007.

Daniel is an avid brick collector and has amassed a collection of about 3,500 bricks that are housed in a custom brick barn behind his home.

His website is available at <https://www.strangebricks.com/>.

For information on establishing a scholarship through the NSU Foundation, visit <https://northwesternstatealumni.com>.

Alumna's planned gift will fund scholarships for female students

A retired educator increased a planned gift through the NSU Foundation to assure the benefits of higher education for future generations. Dr. Diane Knight's bequest to the NSU Foundation will fund three endowed scholarships, the most recent in veterinary technology. She previously established two scholarships in education.

The Dr. Diane Knight Endowed Scholarship in Veterinary Technology, the Dr. Diane Knight Endowed Scholarship in Education and the Willie Mae Hunter Knight Endowed Scholarship in Education are all four-year scholarships that will be awarded to female students from Vernon Parish who must maintain a 3.0 or better grade point average. The Willie Mae Hunter Knight Scholarship honors Knight's mother, who graduated from Louisiana State Normal College, as NSU was then known, in 1940 and was also an educator.

Planned gifts provide long-term financial stability for NSU and funding for scholarships, professorships and other strategic initiatives, said NSU Director of Development Jill Bankston, CFRE. Depending on the type of gift, donors can receive tax benefits in deductions, reduced estate taxes or avoidance of capital gains taxes. Planned gift donors automatically become members of The Columns Society, with invitation to special events on campus.

"This planned gift truly plants seeds for the future," Bankston said. "We are so grateful to Dr. Knight for honoring NSU in this way."

Knight grew up in the Vernon Parish community of Evans and earned an undergraduate degree in education

at McNeese State University in 1976. She started her career teaching high school English, then began working with children with disabilities. She earned a master's degree in special education at Northwestern in 1980 and a Doctor of Education at NSU in 1986 in curriculum and instruction and administrative supervision.

During her career, she worked in Natchitoches, Sabine and Red River parishes, in special education classrooms, in the central office and as an educational diagnostician. She later taught classes at NSU, served as an associate dean at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock and taught at Georgia Southwestern State, University of Southwestern Louisiana (now University of Louisiana-Lafayette) and the University of Georgia, teaching graduates and undergraduate courses on working with individuals with disabilities. After moving back to Louisiana, she worked with men and women in the adult correctional system and concluded her career at LSU-Shreveport. Throughout that time, Knight was active in service to organizations for exceptional children, grant writing, serving on committees at the national level and authoring numerous publications within the field of education.

Knight recalled Dr. Dan Carr and Dr. Hurst Hall as important mentors during her student days at NSU. She stayed engaged with the university over the years, serving on NSU Foundation Board committees and attending recruiting events.

Now at age 70, Knight has travelled the world and enjoys reading, gardening and working part-time at a branch of the East Baton Rouge Public Library. She has



Dr. Diane Knight

no close living relatives but counts close friends as family. In making out her will, she identified organizations she would like to support, including Northwestern. She recently learned about NSU's program in veterinary technology and selected that department to support as well.

"I have a love for animals, particularly cats, so when I saw an article in the Alumni Columns about an endowment for the Vet Tech program, I thought 'I love this idea,'" she said. "I wanted to do something that might be more 'boots on the ground' to help people who are going to major in veterinary technology."

For more information on creating a planned gift for the future of NSU, contact Bankston at bankstonj@nsula.edu or visit www.northwesternstatealumni.com.

THE NSU FOUNDATION WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING NEWLY ESTABLISHED SCHOLARSHIPS.

Daniel & Susan Williams Strange Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/strange-scholarship/>

Cari Worchel Townson Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/townson-scholarship/>

Joe & Pat Pierson Endowed Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/joe-pat-pierson-scholarship/>

Gary Deblieux Memorial Scholarship

<https://northwesternstatealumni.com/deblieux-scholarship/>



NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION
NATCHITOCHES, LOUISIANA

WAYS TO GIVE
NSU.LA/GIVE



Ed Evans Memorial Scholarship honors long-time trainer, mentor

The legacy of a long-time faculty member and athletic trainer will live on through a scholarship bearing his name. The Edward C. Evans Health and Human Performance Scholarship will be awarded to a student in NSU's School of Kinesiology (formerly the Department of Health and Human Performance), where Evans was a valued colleague and mentor.

The scholarship was established at the time of Evans' passing in September 2024 with many friends and former students contributing towards its endowment. It was fulfilled by Tommy McClelland, a former NSU football and track athlete who is now the athletic director at Rice University. McClelland serves on the alumni advisory board for NSU's School of Kinesiology. McClelland began his career as an intern for NSU Athletics while pursuing his master's degree.

"We are truly blessed that our alumni and friends of our former colleague, Ed Evans, have pooled their resources to fund this much-needed scholarship," said Dr. Tara Tietjen-Smith, school director. "Ed was truly an inspiration and had a long-lasting impact on thousands of students. The support from his former students and athletic training community has been amazing."

Evans grew up in Georgia and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1972, and served as a hospital corpsman, which set him on the path that guided his career as an athletic trainer. He was stationed near Washington, D.C., when he met his wife



The Edward C. Evans Health and Human Performance Scholarship has been endowed at the \$10,000 level with administrators striving to reach \$20,000 to benefit students in the School of Kinesiology. From left are Dr. Neeru Deep, dean of the College of Education and Human Development; Terry Wilson, assistant director of Donor Relations for the NSU Foundation; Dr. Haley Blount, assistant professor in HHP; Chris Evans, HHP Department Head Dr. Tara Tietjen-Smith and Kal Pajuluoma, director of Sports Medicine and head football athletic trainer.

Chris, the best friend of his roommate's girlfriend. They were married 49 years and had three children, Jonathan, David and Timothy.

Ed and Chris Evans moved to Natchitoches in 1979 where Evans

earned a master's degree in physical education. He first worked as an athletic trainer at Natchitoches Central High School before joining the staff at NSU where he provided care for student-athletes for 23 years and taught classes

in First Aid and CPR.

Dr. Haley Blount had the unique experience of being a student-athlete, coach, administrator and professor, all while Evans was NSU's head athletic trainer.

"As an athlete I recall that Ed had a hard shell, but once you got to know him you realized how much he loved and cared for both his athletes and the hundreds of athletic trainers he mentored over the years," she said. "His job was very demanding, but you could tell how much he loved it. I really grew to cherish our interactions, especially later in life, because he would always make me laugh, and he took genuine interest in how I was doing. He would absolutely love that we established a scholarship in his name, carrying on his legacy of impactful support of young people."

Friends can contribute to the scholarship by visiting <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/evans-hhp-scholarship/>.



Demon Brothers Crawfest set for April 25

The Demon Brother Booster Club, a non-profit organization that supports the Northwestern State University football program, will hold the fifth annual Crawfest fund raiser in conjunction with the spring Delaney Bowl on Saturday, April 25.

This year's event will include a memorial celebration of Coach Sam Goodwin, beginning at 10 a.m. in Turpin Stadium. In the event of inclement weather, the memorial will be held in A.A. Fredericks Auditorium. Hotel St. Denis in downtown Natchitoches is offering special rates for Crawfest and has blocked additional rooms for the Goodwin celebration.

Crawfest is one of the most successful fund raisers hosted for a Northwestern State athletic team and will include food, fun, performances by NSU spirit groups and a chance to visit with current and former Demon football players.

Events will begin Friday, April 24 with a patron/sponsor pre-Crawfest party with boiled shrimp and a live DJ starting at 7 p.m. under the tent at the tailgate field.

The Delaney Bowl will kick off at noon Saturday, April 25 with an on-field football alumni welcome.

Crawfest will open to the public at 3 p.m. Saturday. NSU Spirit groups will perform at 3:30 p.m. Live zydeco music by the Junior Lacrosse Band will start at 5 p.m. A live auction will close out a silent auction from 7-8 p.m., followed by live music by PaperChase. Auction items will include autographed Demon and NFL helmets, NSU memorabilia, hunting and fishing trips, a snow ski package and much more. NSU Demon attire will also be for sale.

Tickets are \$20 for students with a valid ID, \$60 per individual and \$100 per couple, available thereafter in \$50 increments. Tickets include all you can eat crawfish, beverages, lighted trinkets, live music and a cash bar. Children under 10 get in free.

Sponsorships are available at \$750, \$1,250, \$2,500 and \$5,000. Tickets and sponsorships can be purchased at Demonbrothers.org. Checks can be mailed to Demon Brothers Booster Club, 824 Second St., Natchitoches, LA 71457, or paid by Venmo.

More information about the group is available at demonbrothers.org. You can also follow them on Facebook and Instagram.



Crawfest QR Code



Demon Brothers

Roper tournament set for April 25

The Chris Roper Memorial Golf Tournament is held in memory of Chris Roper, who was killed in a traffic accident over the Christmas holidays in 1982. Chris, a native of Camden, Arkansas, was a senior at Northwestern State and the top golfer on the 1981 Demon Squad. He was a member of the Trans-American All-Conference team, placing ninth in the league tournament.

Proceeds from the tournament are used to fund two scholarships at Northwestern State. This scholarship is given in the memory of Chris Roper. These scholarships are given to two deserving students who are School of Kinesiology majors at Northwestern. Over the years this event has generated enough money to support two scholarships that provide \$1,500 per semester for the recipients.

For more information contact Terry Wilson at wilsont@nsula.edu or 318-357-6348. Friends can contribute to the scholarship by visiting: <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/roper-scholarship/>.

Friday, April 24

Cocktail Kick-off Party— 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Antoon's Liquor Store Patio, Natchitoches, LA

Saturday, April 25

Tournament Check-in at 8:00 a.m.

Tee Off – 8:30 a.m.

Lunch will be provided following the awards.

Robert W. Wilson Recreation Complex
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, LA

SAVE THE DATE

44th ANNUAL CHRIS ROPER MEMORIAL Golf Tournament



SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026

Preparty: Friday, April 24th

Registration Begins on March 24



In Memory

1947 – Margaret “Margie” Barnes Pierson, Feb. 2, 2026, Natchitoches

1950 – Jim Willis, Jan. 3, 2026, Boyce

1958 – Wilburn A. “Mickey” Crnkovic, Jan. 28, 2026, Florien

1958 – John D. Ropp, Dec. 10, 2025, Natchitoches

1963 – Roger Williams, Feb. 23, 2026, Natchitoches

1964 – Charles E. Gordon, Jan. 21, 2026, Centennial, Colorado

1969 – David John “Jack” Schanz Jr., Dec. 12, 2025, Vinton

1970 – Shasta Johnson Daniels, Jan. 16, 2026, Robeline

1972 – Gary Stephen DeBlieux, Jan. 26, 2026, Natchitoches

1973 – Carolyn Frances “Lyn” Nalle Burke, Feb. 9, 2026, Natchitoches

1977 – John Scott Sr., Feb. 17, 2026, Natchitoches

1980 – Antonia “Tonie” Randolph Harwell Sonnier, Feb. 14, 2026, Many
Mrs. Sonnier was a former Title IV-E Grant Fiscal Analyst for the Department of Social Work.

1987 – Russell Allen Jackson, Jan. 25, 2026, Natchitoches

1988 – Russel “Rusty” Eugene Phelps, Jan. 25, 2026, Jennings

1993 – Leslie VanSickle Methvin, March 3, 2026, Natchitoches

1995 – Richard “Ricky” Allen LeVasseur, Jan. 25, 2026, Natchitoches

1995 – Vicky Wall, Feb. 26, 2026, Pineville

1996 – Randel “Randy” Dupree, Dec. 29, 2025, Provencal

2000 – Christopher M. Turner, Jan. 22, 2026, Stonewall

2010 – William Eric Gore, Dec. 23, 2025, Benton

2022, 2025 – Kayla Graham, Jan. 8, 2026, Shreveport

Luther “Buddy” Lott Jr., Dec. 28, 2025, Natchitoches

Adrene Methvin McKnight, Jan. 1, 2026, Natchitoches

Bethany Jeannine Cooper, Jan. 7, 2026, New Iberia

Coach Sam Goodwin, March 20, 2026, Natchitoches
Goodwin was head football coach from 1983-1999 and a member of the N-Club Hall of Fame.

Regalia Closet seeks donations so grads get a commencement tassel to keep

Since 2021, NSU’s Gowns for Grads program has provided caps and gowns to students unable to purchase graduation regalia to wear on graduation day. Dr. Jennifer Shaw, research associate for the Title IV-E Child Welfare Program and instructor in the Department of Social Work, is director of the Regalia Closet and oversees the distribution and collection of caps, gowns, tassels and cords, which are worn during the ceremony and returned afterwards.

Now the program would like to purchase tassels that graduates would be able to keep as a memento.

Darien McMillian, a senior social work major from Many, is spearheading a fund raiser for that purpose. During a Community and Organizations class, he sought a project to address a need in the community and heard about Gowns for Grads.

“I got involved with Gowns for Grads through Dr. Shaw. She one of my

professors. During a class she mentioned she was looking for fundraising ideas to be able to provide students their own tassels through the program. I brought this up as a member of Social Work Club, and we have been working on some things as a club,” McMillian said. “The goal is to give those who do not have the means to afford graduation regalia something of their own for their big day.”

Donors can contribute to Gowns for Grads through the NSU Foundation by visiting <https://northwesternstatealumni.com/gowns-for-grads/>. Monetary donations are also used to purchase fabric disinfectant, hangers, clothing covers and other items. This semester’s commencement

ceremonies will be May 13-14.

Individuals who would like to donate their one-time-use cap and gown can contact Shaw at shawj@nsula.edu or call (318) 357-4650 to make arrangements to donate the gown. Regalia can also be dropped off at the NSU police station on the main campus.



Guess Who



Miss Potpourri 1966 was selected by the Potpourri staff and chosen on the basis of leadership, service and scholastic standing. **Can you name her?** If so, email jacksonl@nsula.edu with your name, city of residence and year you graduated.



From the Winter Edition:

The 37th Miss Northwestern-Lady of the Bracelet pictured in the Winter edition of Alumni Columns was music performance major Jennifer Fox of Haughton. Pictured from left were Sarah Moffett, Gina Mahl, Heather Ragsdale, Fox, Farrah Reyna and Christy Moncrief.

Looking Back



March 17, 2006, Auburn Hills, Michigan

Stuck in the corner with time running out, Jermaine Wallace hit a fadeaway 3-pointer and Northwestern State pulled off a shocker with a furious rally, beating Iowa 64-63 in the first round of the NCAA tournament. Down by 17 with 8½ minutes left, the 14th-seeded Demons stormed back to down the Big Ten tournament champions. The shot was replayed for years and the storied season of the 2005-06 Northwestern State men's basketball team, also known as the "Demons of Destiny," was later chosen by fans as the Southland Conference's Greatest Moment in the sport.

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NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

CLASS OF 1976

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

May 12-13, 2026

Contact Terry Wilson at 318-357-6348
or email wilsons@nsula.edu for more
information.

To register or purchase luncheon tickets:
nsu.la/GoldenJubilee



SAVE THE DATE